

MR. CASPER ALPERN, ALPENA, MICHIGAN.

INTERVIEWED BY  
WM. WAKEHAM AND RICHARD RATHBUN,  
AUGUST 24, 1894.

*Mr. Alpern* (Mr. Alpern is at the head of the Alpena Fish Co. and is an opponent of all fish laws except such as suit his convenience. He is one of the most active members of the Michigan Fisherman's Association, which was organized chiefly with the object of defeating all State legislation that did not meet with their approval.--Rathbun.)

*Sawmills* We have quite a few sawmills along the shores of the lake and they make a practice of dumping their sawdust right into the lake. They do more harm than even the mills here and there is no mistake but that the mills are doing considerable harm, but you cannot prevent that. I have stopped them all from

putting it in around this vicinity so far as I could, but there is a certain amount of refuse goes into the lake anyway, but the most of them have burners and burn their refuse, but still there is a certain amount goes into the water and you cannot help it.

It goes in when they clear the mill and so on and it is carried out in the lake. But there is more harm done from the saw mills situated on the lake shore. There was a law passed by the legislature about 15 years ago applying to these 3 counties here, Alcona, Alpena and Presque Isle, but whether it was made general I do not know, making a very severe penalty to put any kind of refuse in any manner so that it can go into the lake. We tried it, and we prosecuted the Prentiss Lumber Co., and they paid a fine of \$100 and promised to do no more, so that law was all right, but if there is a general law I cannot tell



you.

*offal*  
I understood always there was a United States law for prohibiting the throwing of fish offal into the water, and I know there is a State law for that. I know this local law is still in existence and it is all right.

*Sawdust*  
I have been as far as 25 or 30 miles out on the lake and you would see sawdust floating. That sawdust gets heavy and stays right on the bottom, and no fish can live on the bottom because of that sawdust and no fish eggs would develop. I believe that is partially what hurts our whitefish grounds. They let the edgings, slabs, etc., go out also, but I do not think that interferes to such an extent. It covers the bottom or something like that, and interferes with our nets more than anything else. There are quite a few of those mills here and there is one at Thompson's Harbor. First there is

*mill refuse*

what they call the Turnbull Mill. It is a water mill situated right opposite Middle Island, and they do not take care of their sawdust at all, but let it run right in the lake; then there is one mill at Presque Isle that belongs to French; and there is one at Thompson's Harbor, and one I believe at Roger's City; and none of those mills take care of their sawdust in any manner. Most of them are steam mills, and there is only one water mill among them. Water mills can take care of their refuse just as well as any. We have them here and make them take care of it. There were 2 saw mills here, but they burned down, one was south of here at Alcona, and they were a curse to the whole lake. They were right on the open shore and they ruined that whole ground. That used to be one of the finest fishing grounds there was on the chain of lakes. There is still one

at Greenbush. They simply have trap doors and let the stuff drop right in the water. They use a portion of it for fuel, of course, but they can use only a portion of it. Those mills have been there for years. The first sawdust burner was built here about 18 years ago. There is a work gotten out at Bay City which gives an account of all the lumbering matters of the State. We had a water saw mill here, but they are not sawing any lumber with it now, and have turned it into an electric light plant. They used to pile their sawdust up, regular mountains of it, with edgings, etc., and set it on fire in the winter, but they had a way when they were crowded, by means of trap doors, and they would open the trap doors and let it out into the river and I tried to catch them, but could not. We used to have larger piles of sawdust than they have at Cheboygan.

*Pulp mill*  
The pulp mill was established here in 1883.

It is one of the first ones that was built. This Company is represented by a gentleman named Fletcher who used to live in Detroit and had large interests here. He owns a quarter interest in the original patent that came over here from Germany. They bought that patent. It was owned between him and Vest of Grand Rapids and several others, and this was one of the first mills they established, but 5 years ago I believe they sold the patent to a New York syndicate. Whitney was one of the buyers, and they paid them a million dollars, but they reserved 6 mills that they had built at that time--this mill here, one at Port Huron, one close to Detroit, one in Wisconsin, and 2 somewhere else. They do not make paper here, only the pulp, and ship it. The refuse of the wood of the pulp mill does not injure us at all. They



buy the wood from the farmers and there is an unlimited amount here. But the sewage from the vats is poison to fish. I believe they have 4 vats here where the acid is mixed.

They have quite a large drain draining right into the river. It is no more than 200 or 300 rods from here. It stops us even from cutting ice in the river. We have to have a very severe winter for the river to freeze on that account. They work all winter, day and night. It affects the ice right along on this side, for the current stays on this side, but I do not think it affects it quite as far as the mouth. We dare not fill our boilers here in the river as it affects them to use that water.

There is no fishing in the river now at all. It used to be so we could catch a few maskinonge, suckers and pickerel right here in the river. They generally came in the spring before the mills began to run and

*River  
decrease of fish  
Maskinonge  
suckers  
pickerel*

*River*  
there used to be quite a run of fish here and they used to catch them all along the river.

*refuse*  
I think here everything helps and the pulp mill is one item that destroys the fish.

*sewage*  
*gas works.*  
There is also a large amount of sewage that empties into the river, and the gas works drain right into the lake, and you take every thing in connection, and that is one reason why we have lost our whitefish here in this bay.

*Bark*  
We have trouble from the bark from the first of May to the middle of September, but not later than that, but still we have the effect of it all the season. You take it even after the rafting stops and our fall blows come on we are worse troubled with it than we are even during the summer. It affects our pound nets. When it blows off the lake and stirs up the water it drives the bark into the pound nets. The most damage

is felt by the gill nets, however.

P. *decline*  
Pound net fishing here right in this locality is almost extinct. I am fishing pound nets every year, but I am fishing less every year. I have the twine on hand and am fishing at a loss. I have not made any money out of pound net fishing for the last 7 or 8 years. The pound nets are decreasing because our pound net grounds are really this bay, and certainly if we ruin the ground it will not pay. I used to fish here as high as 30 pound nets and all I have this year is 9. I own on this side 6 miles of beach, all for the purpose of fishing, but it is too foul for fishing purposes now. That ground is covered with refuse of all kinds, but not exactly wood refuse. In some places you will find a slimy substance covering the bottom. I have had divers go down here and they tell me that the bottom of this bay clear

*cause foulness of bay.*

down to the point is covered with a slimy substance. I think it must be from the refuse as that is the only way we can account for it, and it must come from this river. The pound nets up north of the point are killed by this Turnbull mill. That really was a good pound net ground, but this year and last year they have not made their expenses.

*Logs.*  
These rafts of logs, 90 per cent of them come from Georgian Bay, and a few from Lake Superior.

*duty  
affects on  
price*  
There is no duty on fish by the new tariff bill. That is not going to affect the price at all because the duty before was a farce. The Canadians get just as large a price for their fish there as we do here. Fishermen down there are very dependent upon the dealer and always will be. They are always in debt from one year's end to another.



Chit Jim  
trout  
w.b.

walleye

Our great fishing has always been trout and whitefish.

We never catch very many what we call yellow pickerel excepting the first run of pickerel I ever saw here was in the fall of 1885 in August we got quite a run. It lasted about 13 weeks and I put up 25 or 30 tons, and the next year the runs came and lasted longer and were larger runs, and I put up that year about 75 tons of pickerel out of the same amount of twine. We had 3 successive years that we had a run of pickerel and they were just the same class of pickerel they catch in Saginaw Bay. We have not had them since then. I am catching a few now, and we always did catch a few, and a nicer class of pickerel than they get in Saginaw Bay, but it does not amount to anything; perhaps in a fall we put up 4 or 5 tons of pickerel. We do not get any in the spring at all. In the

P.  
Shoal Trout  
Walleye  
Physical  
characteristics  
of bay

pound nets we get nothing but the shoal trout. This never was a pickerel ground. This is a hard bottom and is mostly sand and in some places clay; and stony bottom in a good many places, and I do not think pickerel stay here.

You will find at the mouth of the bay here 21 fathoms of water, and you can come quite a little distance in with that water and then it shallows up to 18, 17 and 12 fathoms, and we have pretty good water close to the shore.

P.  
depth.  
My outside pound nets are in about 40 feet of water. My inside net is in about 12 feet and that is pretty close to the shore.

blue pickerel  
We never use the blue pickerel here. We caught one or two just for curiosity that is all. They are a softer fish than the yellow pickerel. It is surprising how Lake Erie holds out. They will feel a decrease for a year or two and then they will catch more than ever. We do not get the sand pickerel

L. Erie.  
Cond. To  
Pickerel

Sauger

walleye

here. We get very fine large yellow pickerel here. I could show you just as fine yellow pickerel as you ever saw. We had some here this morning.

Perch

Our perch here will average over a lb. We had them so large that they run 65 to 100 lbs. almost as big as bass. They are not much of an item in the fishery here, however, and they do not try to fish for them. I tried it one year in 1865. The spring was very early and I sent out a boat with some nets to fish just for perch--just happened to have some small meshed gill net twine that I had no use for, and I set them in Squaw Bay where it is very muddy bottom, about 6 or 7 miles from here, and I caught about 6 tons in one week. Perch enter gill nets very readily, but all the perch I have been getting now were out of pound nets.

(9)  
(P.)

Bass.

We do not take the black bass abundantly,

but I think there is no body fishing outside and no small fisheries like there are around large cities, but if there were I believe they could catch a good many. We do not get more than half a dozen or so in our pound nets. Black bass are a better fish than any there are and brings a better price. I consider black bass the finest eating there is, and we have inland lakes where they are very abundant, but they are fished there with lines by pleasure seekers.

Sport,  
Inland streams  
B. trout

There is no sport fishing here in the lake, but the inland streams are getting pretty well stocked with brook trout. They have been planting them for the last 4 or 5 years, and they show up nicely. The nearest spot where there is a grayling stream is about 25 or 30 miles from here. No netting is allowed in these inland lakes.

grayling

Cat.

We do not get catfishes here.



*Sturgeon*

We get a few sturgeon. In olden times we used to get a good many sturgeon and I cannot account for their dropping off. You take it 25 or 30 years ago we used to pile them on the beach as they were not worth anything, and now we want them we cannot get them. Still, I catch quite a few during the season off and on. Every time a pound net is lifted they get a few. They will run a good deal smaller than Lake Erie sturgeon. Our sturgeon I suppose will average not over 20 lbs. dressed. Lake St. Clair sturgeon will average 40 or 50 lbs. dressed. I talked with a man who had just come back from the Lake of the Woods, and he tells me that the sturgeon are not so abundant as they have been. That was Neilson.

We have an inland lake here called Hurlburt Lake that has considerable whitefish in it. They have been there as long as I know

*H. J.  
inland Lake*

of. It does not connect with Lake Huron and there is no stream running to it. They do not do any fishing there, only the inhabitants spear them in the fall during their spawning time; and it is strange that where the whitefish spawn the rushes grow to within 3 or 4 feet of the top, and they go with their boats over them and they tell me the whitefish are just as thick right on those rushes and there is a seed that they live on. They used to bring them in here and they tell me that 2 men could spear a pork barrel full in an hour.

*W. f. hooks.*  
I hardly believe whitefish will take a hook. I always considered it a fish story, but still a man did catch whitefish here with a hook and line, but I think he hooked them by playing them up. He was fishing for perch.

*W. bass.*  
We do not get the white bass here. We

*Calico bass.*  
*Sheepshead*

get a few calico bass. We get no sheepshead, and I am mighty glad we do not get any. They bought sheepshead for 1-4 cent a lb. in Detroit. I was there through June and July. They used to haul them in by wagons from the pound nets nearest by and they just spoiled the sale of the good fish.

*Market*

Our home market does not cut much of a figure here for fish. Our fish go mostly east and west. You take all this part of the country, Saginaw, Bay City, and Alpena, so far as here, I do not think they could use 20 per cent of my catch, if I had the exclusive control of the market. I will have by tomorrow about 10 tons of fish in the house. Part of them go to Chicago, part to Buffalo and part to Cleveland. I ship entirely by boat. I ship to Chicago via Bay City and they are transferred on the Michigan Central.

We have a good many lawyers here; and that

*living.*

is what we call them, but I think it is properly an eel pout. We have a good many of them and sometimes we sell them, but we have no chance of shipping them fresh here, so we throw them away, especially this year we throw them all away. Before this I have sold them some, but this year the price of salt fish is so low I do not think it will pay to salt them.

*Esop*  
*maskinonge*  
We get hardly any grass pike, but they are plenty in the inland lakes. There are a few maskinonge here also.

*G. carp*  
I had 2 German carp last year. I planted some in a little lake, but it has a connection with the big lake and I think they must have gone into the big lake from it. I think they destroy other fish; they eat the spawn. They are a very ravenous fish. I think they would eat pickerel spawn and they injure the yellow pickerel, and the bass.



Once in a while I get a few speckled trout

Do not get any bull-heads.

Do not get the moon eye.

We get the long jaw. They were abundant around here a few years back. They seem to come about the same time as the pickerel, but of late years they have left us. Once in a while would see one when I first came here, but in 1836 we had quite a large catch of them here. We get them in both pound and gills nets. They do not rank very high, not much better than herring. The blue fin is just coming on here. We have never had them before until last year and this year. We had more blue fins here this year than I have ever had in all my experience, since I have been here, and get them in almost any depths of water. They run pretty well in size. I have seen them as high as 2 lbs., but very seldom find one 2 1-2 lbs. About

B. trout

bullheads

moon eyes

long jaw

blue fin

1 1-2 lbs. is the average size. If whitefish are scarce you can get rid of them by passing them for whitefish. We do not take the heads off. I had a man working for me

*Suckers sold as w.f.*  
last year from Virginia and he says he saw there in a grocery store suckers nicely dressed and they had a sign up "salt whitefish", and he asked the man if they were whitefish and he told him "yes", and they were selling them there for whitefish. A

*blue fin*  
*long jaw*  
blue fin I think has more bones than the whitefish, and the same way with the long jaw. The long jaw has more bones than the blue fin; they are all bones. The only thing that will beat the long jaw is the shad. We

*menominee*  
do not get the menominee whitefish here. We call the long jaws menominee whitefish sometimes, and they are somewhat similar only the menominee is a darker colored fish, but just about the same shape.

*Herring*

The herring are not abundant about here, but they used to be. We used to get late in the fall quite a large catch of herring. We have never taken much account of them and in the spring we let them all go, as we have no market for them fresh and do not salt them, and so dump them right out of our boats. The largest catch of herring I ever had was 4 years ago, and I put up 2,000 half barrels of them, but they commenced to run thin the latter part of August and stayed here until October. Our herring are a good deal smaller than the Lake Erie herring. I think they will go about 3 to the lb. Some years they will run a little larger than others. You take it not later than 10 or 12 years back we never cared for herring as whitefish were in abundance here and we got in the habit of fishing large mesh twine to catch the whitefish and most of the herring would go through

I put 4 nets in last season right off this shallow here between Middle Island and Thunder Bay Island, and expected to catch some whitefish. It was large mesh twine and when we were lifting the pot it would be full of herring and by the time we would lift it they would all escape except a few of the largest. But here in the bay even the herring are leaving. Lake Huron would not furnish such a herring fishery as they have on Lake Erie.

All the herring caught in Lake Huron would not cut much of a figure in the market.

*most imp. fishery*  
*trout*  
*abundance*  
*size*  
*habits*  
Our most important fishery here has been the trout. Our trout I claim are increasing steadily in abundance. The size is the same as it was. The size is owing to where you have your nets. If you get in deep water you will catch smaller trout. The depth regulates the size of the fish. The trout go in schools, and when their spawning time

comes they go together. We get them in spots in our nets. Some nets will fish very heavily, and then may lift 2 or 3 nets and get only here and there a fish. You see we lift about 7 miles of nets a day, and if they were pretty well distributed we would get a pretty good catch of fish.

Each tug lifts about 8 miles of nets. We lift by hand. Right now we are fishing in 23 or 24 fathoms of water; that is where the best fishing is now. We have 6 men lifting our nets. We have 90 lead nets, about 55 rods long; and in lifting they spell each other two men lifting at a time; it takes them about 4 hours to lift 8 miles. We lift sometimes in 70 fathoms. We figure that if it is very easy lifting and they are in shallow water and everything goes all right, they get through in about 3 1-2 hours. And it does not make any difference if they had 2

q.  
quantity

logs

depth

men  
methods

descrip



4. tons of fish in them it would not take any longer. I would not want to try lifting by steam here. I should think it would be all right if they had a nice clear bottom; but the way we have it here where they get foul of everything, may be every 15 minutes, a man knows it when he is hauling by hand, but they would separate our nets a half dozen times a day with the steam arrangement.

*trout size*  
In the spring I think the trout average about 2 1-2 lbs., and this time we are fishing in shallow water and get a larger fish, and in the fall our trout will average 3 lbs.

*Spawning*  
Our shallow trout spawn the fore part of September. We call them shallow trout because they come on along the islands on the rocks to spawn, and they are a larger class of trout; much larger than the deep water trout. ~~It~~ is a black trout, and a very handsome fish. In the spring we fish in

*Season depth*

deeper water and get smaller fish, and we get a different species.

*Siscowet*

Do not get any siscowet here except once in a while one.

*Trout  
quantities  
market*

I have 90,000 lbs. of trout here that I froze this spring. A year ago last winter the Buffalo Fish Company had over 500 tons of blue fish, halibut, and cod frozen, and they sold almost 50 per cent right in New York. Their fish did not average them in Buffalo after they were frozen, over 4 cents a lb., and they sold some of those fish back to New York for 8 and 10 cents a lb. They did not make any money last winter; but lost very heavily. They claim they lost last winter \$100,000, but they made so much money 4 or 5 years before that they can afford to stand that loss.

*Trout,  
Spawning*

There are no two years alike when fish spawn but on an average we consider that the shal-

low water trout begin to spawn about the first week in September. Sometimes they do not spawn until the 20th, but they spawn sometimes during September. Our common lake trout spawn the fore part of October. Their spawning ground is in all the way from 12 to 16 fathoms of water; that is the big reef we have in the middle of Lake Huron. It is about 40 miles from the mouth of the river here.

g.  
loc.  
to out  
depth  
We are fishing gill nets all over Lake Huron on both sides. I have had gill nets so close to the Duck Islands that we could see people walking there. We do not fish in that deep hole in the middle of the lake. That is about 170 fathoms. Once in a while we get into 100 fathoms, but get a very poor quality of fish there. We get our good trout in not deeper than 40 fathoms. Sometimes we fish in deeper water than that if

the fishing drops off--have a still spell of weather and the fish swim high--we drop in deeper water. One of my boats lifted in 80 fathoms last Wednesday.

I have never tried fishing midway between the bottom and the surface. The trout come up near the surface in the summer. If the water is still the trout swim high. Never saw them schooling at the surface, however.

Trout and whitefish used to run together considerably, but not now. I had gill nets in this bay in 1878-9, and out fish would run all the way from 1-4 to 2-3 whitefish. We catch a few whitefish in the gill nets with the trout now, but not many, but at that time we did. Do not get them together in the pound nets much if we get good fishing. Our best white fishing that we used to have in 1878, I had a small tug fish out of the river here, and she took as her record 54,000

Trout  
habits

Trout  
w.f.  
association  
prop.

w.f.  
abundance

lbs. of whitefish in one week, dressed whitefish, off that shoal, and there was not a single trout in the lot.

*trout spawning ✓*  
 The trout will spawn as late as the last of October. We figure on their beginning to spawn the fore part of October and finishing towards the last of the month. I think the spawning time is longer in trout than it is in whitefish. Whitefish spawn very quick and leave at once. Trout may remain on their spawning ground for sometime after they are done spawning. You will find the trout hanging around their spawning ground until sometime in the middle of November.

*winter fishing sport ✓*  
 I do not do any winter fishing and there is no winter fishing done around here except a little for sport. Some go out here in the bay and spear trout through the ice. They get the regular large shallow trout.

*trout season ✓*  
 I think those large trout are always



*trout*

around the shore. We get them all through the season more or less. Do not get them so much during the summer, but we get them during the spring. I think there are 20 different varieties of trout. We have the shoal trout, common trout, and then we have a white trout, big bellied white trout. It is not like the siscowet, but the shape of it is like the siscowet, but it is not quite so fat. We have a little reef off Presque Isle, and whenever we put nets there we always get some of that class of trout. They are short and thick and almost white, but they are a good fish. One or two years I caught lots of them in my trap nets.

*Varieties**Eels.*

The U.S. Fish Commissioner promised to send me some eels here for the last 4 or 5 years, but has never done so. I want to plant some eels. I do not think the eels can hurt our spawn very much here in the bay. My inten-

tion was to plant them way up here above in this river. That will be a good place for them.

*Trout.  
rate of growth*

A trout weighing 2 lbs. you cannot tell how old it is, but I think a trout is a fast growing fish. I think it grows as fast as whitefish. I think it makes a difference in the kind of trout, however. The trout they planted here last winter they told me some of them were about 6 months old and they were trout about 7 inches long, and they were just as lively fish as I ever saw.

*eggs taken*

The spawn the hatchery men take here is all from the best class of trout. They generally go out on our tugs. Our lake trout on this reef are fully as good and fully as fine a fish as the shallow trout. They get some spawn from the shallow trout and some from the other.

*Trout  
young  
habits*

I think the young trout live in deep wa-

Front  
Small  
●  
Loc.  
season

Throwing out

ter. Sometimes we will catch trout quite small size in the gill nets, and we catch more of them in deep water than in shallow water, but in the spring when the fishing is abundant in deep water we catch quite a few small trout. We catch them all sizes. Of course, if they are real lively we throw them back in the water, otherwise we throw them in the offal barrel. I do not think young trout stay in shallow water, but I think young whitefish do.

food

(Shiners)

The trout eat everything. They live principally on other fish. I think they live mostly on shiners, herring etc. If we have lots of shiners around we have lots of trout. The shiners grow about 4 or 5 inches long, and they are a nuisance. The trout follow them right up, but sometimes you get them, but sometimes you get them pretty thick and they are a nuisance. I am perfectly

satisfied to handle trout, and do not care about handling shiners. The trout destroy immense quantities of herring during the course of a year. I do not think hardly any thing destroys the trout. I think the trout take pretty good care of themselves. Other fish may live off trout eggs, however. But you take it where trout are spawning you do not find any suckers, and suckers live on spawn. On the ground where trout are spawning you will find hardly any other fish and I do not think there is anything to disturb them. I hardly think other fish come in and feed on their spawn even after they leave the ground. We have had nets on the spawning ground pretty late after they were done spawning and we never found any other fish there. Almost anything feed on whitefish, suckers, especially will eat the spawn, and sturgeon also. The trout do not eat spawn, they want

Enemies of trout

Enemies of  
M.F.  
Suckers  
Sturgeon  
Trout food

something stronger.

*W. f.*  
*abundance*  
Comparatively we get no whitefish at all,  
now; that is along this part of the lake.

*P*  
They have been getting a few whitefish of  
late years off Au Sable, in pound nets, but  
around here, as far as Cheboygan, they do not  
get many. In 1882 was the last catch of  
pound nets we have had to any amount. They  
commenced to drop off from then and they  
dropped off very fast. From 1885 to 1888  
my catch of whitefish would not be over 10  
per cent of my catch of fish. In 1889 the  
*9*  
whitefish all at once came back on our gill  
net grounds, and the fall of 1889 there were  
just as many whitefish as I ever saw on their  
spawning grounds. They came early and all  
at once. They came about the last week in  
October and stayed until about November 20.  
The last lift we had was 3,650 lbs. We had  
as much as 5 tons to a lift off that ground



99.7.  
abundance

in 1889, but since that time they have not come back there, but I think the cause has been that there has not been a single fall since then that the water has been such that they could come back.

Season

We never caught any of those fish in the spring. Never had any spring whitefishing here. In olden times we used to get them in August and sometimes in June. That was as late as 1880-81; we had very big June fishing here, but we did not get them on the same ground. We used to get them right off Thunder Bay Island. Before that time the whitefish were very abundant about here sometimes; but that is way back 30 or 40 years ago.

loc.

G.  
mesh

P.

No small w/f caught.

There has never been any small meshed gill nets fished here. The smallest mesh we have ever fished has been 4 5-8, and with pound nets there never was any small whitefish

*P.*  
*season*  
*trout*

caught, and there never was any pound netting only in the fall. I was the first man to set pound nets here in the spring, and I never caught anything but trout. In times back they always used to figure to commence to drive stakes in July so that they could get their nets in by the first of September. But we did not expect a very heavy run of fish until the first of October.

*N.Y. size*  
*proposed law*  
*minimum size*  
*throwing out alive*  
*few small fish with many big ones*

The whitefish ~~was~~ get now run pretty good size. One of the features of our bill that we were trying to get through the legislature was that no one should be allowed to catch or handle any whitefish weighing less than 1 lb. dressed. That would make them about 1 1-2-lb. round. We would throw the small white fish back alive and there is no reason why they could not do it, just capsize the net and throw them out. If there is a large catch of big fish there is hardly ever any small ones mixed with them.

The proper size of the pot is a question

I do not think can be regulated by any law;  
the only thing you can regulate by law is the

size of fish to be caught. If there is a  
uniform law that we shall not handle fish

under a certain size we would not try to  
catch them. If I have a pound net that

will catch those small fish, I would not fish  
that small mesh; a larger mesh twine is cheap

er, and if I could not dispose of those small  
fish I would not try to catch them. You can-

not regulate the mesh; because we have a law

regulating the mesh in Michigan for the pound  
nets, but it is a dead letter because it puts

a proviso in saying you can catch small fish,  
providing you catch no whitefish; and you

have to put a sign up for the small whitefish  
not to go in. Here with us we fish for no

herring, and I fish 3 inch mesh. Our her-  
ring run small enough any how and we do not

P.  
proper mesh.  
can't be reg. by  
law.

size of fish.

would lead to  
increase of  
mesh

Mich. law.  
relative to mesh  
dead letter

P.  
size mesh off  
Alpena.

P.

care anything about the little fellows, but just as soon as you fish a larger mesh, say 3 1-2 inch, a pickerel weighing 2 1-2 lbs.

will go right through it and you could not catch any pickerel at all, only the very largest, and pickerel will go through even a 3 inch mesh, and after the mesh is tarred it

shrinks almost half an inch. We do not catch any of those pickerel like they do up around Cheboygan. You will see a lot of them in there, but just as soon as you go to lift, they will skip out.

Another thing, there should not be a pickerel caught or sold--a yellow pickerel is the finest fish there is swimming and you can ship them almost anywhere you want to--there should not be a pickerel caught or sold less than 1 lb. round. That is a more important matter than the whitefish. Our pickerel are

*mesh or walleye**shrinkage**walleye min. size**value*

one of the most productive fish, and you will find them in such abundance in a few years, and the man who lets them go does not lose anything, for if fishing is his business, in future years he will make money by it.

I do not know as you can regulate the size of the lake trout. You cannot sell a lake trout unless it weighs over a lb. as it is no good, and we are fishing now a mesh just as big as can be fished, and the only way we catch them is when they get caught by the teeth or get tangled up, and if they are alive and kicking they throw them back in the water, and if not they throw them in the of-fal barrel. There is a very small percentage of trout caught in the pound nets, and what ~~are~~ caught are the large shoal trout. Our trout that we catch in the pound nets in the spring will average 4 or 5 lbs. In the fall we do not catch any trout in our pound

trout,  
min. size

q.  
mesh

Small ones  
caught by teeth

Throwing out

P.  
trout  
quantity  
big



nets, nor in the summer.

We use 4 5-8 inch mesh in the gill nets.

The law is 4 1-4. I used to fish 4 3-4.

Once in a while, a man takes a notion to fish

4 3-4, and sometimes 4 3-8, but 4 5-8 has

been the standard mesh around here. There

is very little shrinkage to gill nets. We

clean and tan our gill nets every once a

month. My neighbor here across the way com-

menced to use this hemlock extract. It is

very dark, but you can make it light by the

amount you put in. But I have been using

bark for years and it is very easy to be had

here. We do not want any dark nets; only

just the faintest trace of color. We tan

entirely by steam here.

With us fishing is a business from the

word go. There is not a year that I do not

bust the ice in the spring, and I fish the

last thing in the fall. A year ago we quit

I think the United States government ought

4.  
mesh

shrinkage  
care

4.  
season

early, December 10, and the year before that we lifted the last nets December 23, and the year before that on the 22nd.

*Close season*

As to the close season, there are not any two localities where the fish spawn at the same time. You take it here, our trout spawn in October, and some in September. Our whitefish, what few we have, spawn in November. On Lake Michigan they spawn in December. Those big Lake Michigan whitefish on the shoals spawn sometimes away the last of December. You take it on Detroit River, whitefish spawn in October, and our trap net whitefish spawn in October also. When we had abundance of whitefish they spawned in October mostly. So you could not regulate it at all. You might make local laws for a close season in each locality, but local laws are of no use.

*trout  
spawning*

*whitefish  
spawning*

*Federal Govt.  
make laws*

I think the United States government ought

to pass general laws to regulate the fishing on the whole chain of lakes. That is if it is possible. A law to regulate the size of the fish. That is one important fact. If you regulate the size of the fish you regulate the mesh. They had it in that bill Whittaker introduced in the legislature that we should quit the first of November and start the first of May, and in that case we would all have to quit the business altogether entirely. I would rather, if they want to give the fish a rest, give them the rest of the year, (May to November) and let us fish up to the first of May. I would rather take that part of the year and give them all the balance.

R. Connable, Jr., of Petoskey, is our secretary, and we had quite a number of copies of our bill typewritten. The principal features of it are these: We regulated the size

*Regulate size  
of fish*

*Whittaker's  
close season*

*Fishermen's bill  
features  
size of fish*

of the fish. We put the size of whitefish at 1 lb. dressed, or 1 1-4 lb. round. We put the size of pickerel at 1 lb., and we left the perch alone. Then we made it that when any body was engaged in fishing he should, at the spawning season, take the spawn of the female fish and take the milt of the male fish--and he is obliged to have a competent man to do so--and impregnate it, and go through the same process that the fish hatchery men do, and deposit it on the ground where the fish are caught, and make a daily report. He has to keep a record, something like a log book, to show how much spawn he deposited. He shall report to the Secretary of State every month the amount, so as to keep statistics, and he must keep a record himself. The penalty I believe was \$100 fine if he does not do that. Then there was a proviso in it that the United States or

w. f.

walleye

perch

Returning  
SpawnSupplying  
hatcheries

State hatcheries, if they required any spawn, to provide them with all the spawn they shall require. That was the principal features of the bill.

*Saw, fishermen  
to pay 90 in  
catch*

Following are the provisions of an act which passed the Michigan State Legislature, but was afterwards held up and tabled. Mr. Alpern did not know its purpose: Every fisherman is required to pay 1-4 cent a lb. for each fish he catches, and has to make his monthly report and send the money over, and has to swear to it. And if he swears to a lie and they prove it they can prosecute him for perjury,--and the money to be used by the Fish Commission of the State. Bill No.429, Senate of Michigan, 1883.

*Fish Comm's bill*  
*Comments*

Mr. Alpern showed us a copy of the State Fish Commission bill of 1893, which passed the Senate, but not the House, having been fought by the Fisherman's Association. We



went over the provisions of the bill with Mr. Alpern, and he made comments on the different sections, as follows:-

Section 1--Would affect Saginaw Bay.

You take it in the bight of the bay they have pound nets more than 4 miles from shore, but still they could not set them more than 1 or 2 miles in length, the inner end of the leaders being some distance off-shore.

Inside lines--They are sometimes 75 rods, but they are generally 40 or 50 rods. I do not set generally more than 3 nets in a string.

Section 2.- Prohibiting the setting of nets in channels between islands and reefs.- I think that section is all right. You do not want to stop channels up. In some places they will allow the strings to run

across the whole channel so that vessels will have to go around it. They are trying that section in the Supreme Court now.

Section 3.- No one shall take whitefish weighing less than 1 3-4 lbs.--That would be a pretty big fish.

Section 5.- Close season. No black bass or white bass shall be taken between the first day of April and the 15th of June.-- That is in the interest of the sporting men, and I do not believe in that for the lakes. It is all right for the inland lakes; and we have abundance of inland lakes, and if they want to go there and fish they can do so.

Section 7.--Relates to putting offal and sawdust in the water.--That is all right. We have that in our bill also.

Section 8.--Places the size of the mesh

in the pot at 3 1-2 inches, excepting for the pickerel, etc., which is 2 1-2, and 5 inches in other parts of the pound.--We use 5 inches anyway. We use 7 for the leads and 5 for hearts. We use bigger mesh because the nets will stand better, and the fish will lead just as well.

Section 9.--Places gill nets at 4 1-4 inches.--We do not use as small as that; and that is one reason why I say there is no necessity of placing any size. You regulate the size of fish and the mesh will regulate itself. If they have 2 3-4 inch mesh for taking perch and long jaws, how can any body tell if the whitefish or trout gets in there. They are set on the same grounds and we catch them on the same grounds.

*Seining*  
They do not do any seining on this lake, only at the mouth of Detroit River. If you will regulate the size pickerel to be caught

that nothing should be sold less than 1 lb., they are not going to seine with those small mesh seines. There is no possible chance for a man to catch any fish at all with a 3 1-2 inch seine, and that size mesh would easily prohibit seining. That is for white fish it would be all right, but, you know, this does not say for whitefish. But you take the seining for pickerel in the river St.Clair it is a big item. There are thousands of dollars worth caught on the River St.Clair, and they could not do anything with a 3 1-2 inch mesh.

(End of discussion of proposed fishery

act.)

*seining*

They do not do any drag netting here on Lake Huron, nor any seining, as we have no shore for it. I do not think there is much done on Lake Michigan either.

*Traps*  
*P.*

Trap nets are not fished here at all. When I speak of trap nets I mean pound nets. I tried trap nets here on that whitefish shoal, but it cost me a good deal of money and I quit it. They do not use fyke nets here, but use them over on Saginaw Bay.

*Fykes*

*Traps*

Blind, or trap, nets are fished on Lake St. Clair, and they have quite a lot of them. I tried to make one here about 20 years ago, and I believe I was the first man that tried to fish them here, but mine was a little different from what they have now, but the pot and tunnel were about the same, but I had one pot on each end, and had 100 rods of lead between them, and after I had it all done I sent the men out with a little tug to set it,



and a gale of wind came up just as we got one pot set, and we had to skip out and dump the twine right overboard, and when I came back for my twine and lifted the pot up it had whitefish in it. I understand they are fishing them on the Canadian shore, and some on Lake St. Clair, but on Lake St. Clair all they catch is pickerel, perch and suckers. There need be no buoy at all for them. I have never fished them here, still I think they would be a great net, if they could catch trout. They would be a great net to catch trout in September in places where you can set them where it is stony and you cannot set any other net. But there are none of them on Lake Huron I know. I call them blind nets. You can use them in any depth of water. They have never been used in deeper than 35 or 40 feet here.

I freeze my fish with ice here.

Method of  
freezing

P.  
g.  
Cond. fish

It is certain a pound net fish is a better looking fish, but I think a gill net fish is fully as good, and better in summer time than the pound net fish, because it is a deeper water fish.

g.  
boats

We fish gill nets here with small boats. I have 6 sail boats. They stay out 12 miles from here at a point on the shore. We do not use tugs for fishing our pound nets. The tug fishing is a very expensive mode of fishing. The only way you can make tug fishing pay, you have to handle a large amount of twine. At Detour they never did much tug fishing except once in a while somebody would go there with a tug and fish a short time and leave for some other locality. The locality is not good, only as a headquarters. There is one certain time of year when they can catch fish there, but here our tugs do not think of going less than 30 miles away from

luc

here, and from that to 40 or 60 miles.

This has been the best fishing ground for whitefish and trout in Lake Huron, and our trout have the best reputation today in New York of any. In olden times it used to be the Mackinaw trout, but for the last 10 or 15 years it was Alpena trout, and our frozen fish always bring a better price. The size commands it. We have always caught medium sized fish. Once in a while we catch a trout 35 or 40 lbs., but will catch perhaps only 2 or 3 a week. They are a hard thing to sell. All you can use is once in a while one for a large hotel.

*Thunder Bay  
best ground in  
L. Huron*

*Front  
quality*

*Size*